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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR IN JIGAWA STATE, GOVERNOR EXPECTS LITTLE
CHANGE FOR 2011 ELECTIONS

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Classified By: Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders for reasons 1.4(b) and
(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On May 14, 2009, the Ambassador traveled to Jigawa State, one of the poorest in Nigeria, to hand over HIV/AIDS equipment to the Dutse General Hospital on behalf of the USG through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). While in Jigawa, the Ambassador met Governor Alhaji Sule Lamido, a seasoned politician, PDP stalwart and former minister of foreign affairs (2000-2003) who shared his opinion on the 2011 elections and PDP politics. The governor also highlighted his state's perpetual struggle with poverty and requested USG assistance in malaria prevention, waste management, reforestation, school renovation, and improved medical care. The Ambassador also paid a courtesy visit to the Emir of Dutse, Nuhu Muhammad Sanusi, a modern, western educated (attended Ambassador's alma mater) and pro-U.S. traditional ruler in a conservative northern state. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On May 14, in a private meeting with the Ambassador (StaffAide notetaker) at Government House in Dutse, Jigawa State, Governor Alhaji Sule Lamido, a seasoned politician, spoke freely about the 2011 elections and PDP politics. He said the problem in Nigeria is that politicians are acting out of personal anger and are not keeping the best interests of the country at heart. Lamido said the North-South divide is increasingly problematic since, "Southern leaders are only concerned about their own domestic politics." He said that there will be a lot of noise in 2011 and that big personalities like Buhari, who was "weak, lacking integrity, and without a constituency", and Atiku (Abubakar), who he called "empty and without substance" would continue their roles as "irritators". He opined that the people fussing about election reform were those who personally lost something in the last election. He referred to government as "Nigeria's biggest industry", saying the opportunity to make money clouds the meaning of true public service. He doubted any change until Nigerian leaders decide to do the right thing, and seemed very proud to be a part of the ruling PDP party since it has the size and power to dominate the political landscape despite the infighting and internal positioning of late. He did admit that the party, however, was in need of reform and more democratization. However, he said opposition parties simply lack capacity and are too weak, adding, "If you challenge me I will destroy your party." He also defended what he perceives as a bias against the PDP stressing that when the Action Congress (AC) won in Lagos and the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) won in Kano "everyone said 'good job', but when the PDP won in Ekiti just look at what happened- no one congratulated us."

¶3. (C) Comment. Lamido is a long-time politician in Nigeria starting with a stint in the House of Representatives in the early 1970s and serving most recently in the Obasanjo Administration as Foreign Minister from 2000-2003. Claiming his return to Jigawa was to serve his people, Lamido is clearly a pragmatic, clever politician and PDP loyalist whose real intentions are certainly suspect. End comment.

¶4. (C) In addition to their political discussion, Governor Lamido asked the Ambassador for assistance in other priority areas such as malaria prevention, waste management, reforestation and school/hospital renovation. The Ambassador promised to check with other elements of the Mission on areas of potential support. She brought representatives from the Office of Security Cooperation (OSC) with her to Jigawa and was able to connect them with appropriate interlocutors from the state government to discuss possible projects such as renovating schools, building medical waste incinerators, and constructing a new medical ward to provide additional bed capacity in the always overcrowded General Hospital where CDC and PEPFAR also have programs. She also agreed to send the Governor a list of NGOs in Nigeria working on waste management and reforestation.

¶5. (U) After meeting the governor, the Ambassador attended a handover ceremony of HIV/AIDS equipment to the Dutse General Hospital on behalf of the USG through CDC and PEPFAR. Health care is a serious concern in Jigawa State. According to Governor Lamido, Jigawa has the highest infant mortality rate in Nigeria due in part to its dearth of doctors (20 doctors for 4.4 million residents). The governor requested the Ambassador's assistance in providing medical training for doctors. The Ambassador explained that while we do not have specific training programs for doctors within the Mission, she would provide the governor with a list of NGOs that may be able to provide such training.

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¶6. (U) While in Jigawa, the Ambassador also paid a courtesy visit to the Emir of Dutse, an MBA grad of Ohio University and a modern, pro-U.S. traditional ruler in a conservative northern state.

SANDERS